

Steven Ashe was born in 1960 and is the author of numerous books on esoterica.

He has a B.A. Honours Degree in Interactive Multimedia Communication and lives in Glastonbury, England.

In addition to writing for Prediction Magazine and producing several audio CDs of instruction on the practical Qabalah, his published work includes the seminal *Qabalah of 50 Gates; The Complete Golden Dawn Initiate* – a collection of practical magical lore evolved from the Golden Dawn Tradition through such groups as the Argentium Astrum, the Order of the Cubic Stone and the Fraternity of the Sanctum Regnum & *The Picatrix*, a grimoire of planetary and astrological magic synthesised from all four volumes of the original Arabic masterwork.

Steven Ashe

*For Christine Borg*

With grateful thanks to Andrew Woodbury and Mel Williams in whose country estate I was able to complete the handwritten manuscript of this work in the tranquility of the Somerset countryside

.. also to John Melrose, Dave Dobbs, Shwing, Gerald Shakespeare, Jennifer and Denny Ratnayake, Derek Rolls Derek Ford for their encouragement in my investigation of the Great Work of Alchemy.

**Rosicrucians & Alchemist of La Belle Époque**

**Rosicrucians  
& Alchemists  
of  
La Belle Époque**

**Steven Ashe**

**Warburg-Maple 2011**

**Steven Ashe**

Rosicrucians & Alchemists  
of La Belle Époque

© 2011 - Steven Ashe

Published by Warburg-Maple 2011

ISBN: 978-1-4478-0607-3

## **Rosicrucians & Alchemist of La Belle Époque**

Hermetic Alchemy has experienced something of a rough ride in terms of the history of the past one hundred years. The discoveries of the Atomic Age, nuclear fusion and fission, have demonstrated the possibility of the transmutation of elements; albeit in a volatile radioactive form. Since then, it has been the materialist school of Alchemy which has provided the general focus of attention. Any truly philosophical interest seems to have become entangled in the embryonic pseudo-jargon of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Century psychologists such as Freud, Jung, Adler, Reich and Leary.

However, what we might refer to as the 'Heavy Metal' school of Alchemy is far from being the only school of Alchemy popular today. Amongst the more interesting derivations from the image of practical Alchemy conjured up by the mundane imagination number approaches embracing sexual Tantra, the cultivation of narcotics, disciplines of Yogic abstinence and other quite diverse preoccupations.

## Steven Ashe

As bizarre as many of these devotions may seem, a common thread runs through each of them. That is; the realisation that, no matter the approach, the end towards which these quite diverse means are seen to be directed is one closely bound up with the issue of the expansion of Human Consciousness.

Even the materialism of the Heavy Metal school of Alchemy enshrines an innate belief in the transformation of the Alchemist as a pre-requisite to the transmutation of metals. Other approaches, such as the Sexual Alchemy of Aleister Crowley's Thelemic Tantra, are more directly concerned with the issue of consciousness change. Here, brazenly orgiastic rites of sexual ecstasy and the intoxication of wine and strange drugs induce the hormonal stimulation of states of altered consciousness.

Timothy Leary's LSD inspired visionary initiatives of the 1960s provided a slightly less cult like expansion of Crowley's Tantric Alchemy, bringing a rising awareness of the place of sensuality within the urge towards

## **Rosicrucians & Alchemist of La Belle Époque**

spirituality. Leary even quotes Crowley in his autobiography.

Although Leary quickly fell from grace and academic respectability, the work of other researchers into the chemical nature of consciousness such as Dr John Lilly, famous for his researches into neural meta-programming employing psychotropic agents within sensory deprivation tanks, proved more lasting in the domain of orthodox research.

Eastern schools of Alchemy similarly focus upon the hormonal processes as being the tools of transformation within the physical laboratory of the human body. Whereas some of these alchemic methods involve the stimulation of altered states of awareness through strict self denial, others utilise explicit sexual stimulation and taboo breaking practices of sexual congress designed to exhaust the everyday consciousness and thus allow the free flow of supra-mundane energies to rise through the Chakras. These latter mentioned rites of orgiastic yoga are clearly depicted within the

**Steven Ashe**

sculptures of the temples of southern India.

At first glance, all of these widely differing practices might seem so far removed from accepted traditional notions of the alchemical art that any attempt to link them appears fanciful. However, from the mid Nineteenth Century until just prior to the Second World War, embryonic aspects of every one of these alternatives to the heavy metal school of Alchemy were the subject of intense investigation amongst the occult underground of Parisian salon society.

Indeed, it is most revealing that the patrons of three Parisian Bookstores - *L'Art Independant*, the *Vega Bookstore* and the *Bookstore of the Marvellous* - and the esoteric societies using these well-springs of philosophical literary treasure seem to have provided the catalyst for the explosion of interest in Alchemy from the dawn of the Twentieth Century to the present day.

The importance of the influence of the Continental School in the development of western Hermetic lore has been much



## **Rosicrucians & Alchemist of La Belle Époque**

overlooked by the English speaking audience. Yet it is from the crucible of esoteric culture emanating from these three esoteric bookshops that a melting pot of experimentation with alchemic metallurgy, sexual tantra and even psychedelic drug use has emerged to inform the occult tradition.

On June 5th 1926 an Alchemic work entitled ‘The Mystery of the Cathedrals’ was published by Jean Schemit, Paris, under the authorship of the pseudonymous Fulcanelli.

This was a collaborative work purporting to reveal an alchemic interpretation of symbolic codes enshrined in Gothic Cathedral architectural design. The core of the work was based upon detailed notes entrusted to the book’s illustrator Jean Julien Champagne by Rene Schwaller, whose more detailed later investigations of the architecture of early Egyptian monoliths brought him fame.

In Schwaller’s own words; “I showed him [Fulcanelli] the documentation I had gathered of cathedral symbolism. He got

## Steven Ashe

very excited and assured me he would give me a hand in publishing it. I was at that time thinking about moving away from Paris; the whole social affair was taking too much of my time. But I had been working on a book with detailed proof through the structural elements of the cathedrals, and through the sculpture and ornaments, that they were a Christian expression of the Hermetic Oeuvre. ... I did talk to him about all the material I had gathered concerning the symbolism of cathedrals. At that time I intended to publish something on the subject, and he made me believe he could help me; he had connections. He really was most interested when I showed him the manuscript, and asked to borrow it for a few days, to look at it more closely in view of presenting it to a publisher. It took me a long time to get the manuscript back, and when he did return it, his opinion was that this material should not get published, that it revealed too much, and publication was bound to lead me to adverse consequences. A regular confidence man he was, that one!

## **Rosicrucians & Alchemist of La Belle Époque**

But I admit I had had thoughts in that direction myself, and he merely confirmed them. Well I had other things on my mind. I was at that time preparing to move up to Suhalia [in Switzerland], and that was an enormous undertaking. We left shortly thereafter and I gave no further thought to the matter. I didn't stay in touch with the Paris people, wanted to get away from all that social involvement. Then in 1926 I find out about the publication of *Le Mystère des Cathédrales*! It was completely based on my work.” Andre Vandebroek *Al-Kemi: A Memoir : Hermetic, Occult, Political, and Private Aspects of R.A. Schwaller De Lubicz* (Lindisfarne Books 1990).

Unbeknown to Schwaller, who was amazed and taken by surprise by the appearance of *The Mystery of the Cathedrals*, Champagne had also incorporated material pertaining to the ‘Language of the Birds’ (the jargon of the Hermetic Adepts) from the pen of Pierre Dujols; the proprietor of the Bookstore of the Marvellous.

Dujols was well connected in Freemasonic

## Steven Ashe

and pseudo-Rosicrucian circles and was the associate and confidante of incredibly wealthy and influential patrons of Parisian esoteric society. The children of Ferdinand de Lesseps who had supervised the building of the Suez canal, occult illustrator of the Tarot Oswald Wirth, Freemasonic mastermind and later convert to Sufi Islam Rene Guenon and the Occult Master known as Papus: all numbered amongst the close circle surrounding him.

Dujols was a scholar of Greek literature and a fanatic proponent of the notion that ancient Greek and not Latin provided the linguistic origins of the French language.

These Greek roots provided Dujols with an etymology of Alchemic jargon which he termed Hermetic Cabala. This system provided an interpretive language of puns and Cant which became known alternately as the *Green Language* or the *Language of the Birds*.

This unorthodox approach to Alchemic linguistics proved popular as a focus of

## **Rosicrucians & Alchemist of La Belle Époque**

debate amongst the esoteric intelligentsia frequenting the classes held weekly at the Bookstore of the Marvellous. Dujols later became a close associate of Jean Julien Champagne and later became an active member of his mystic society known as the Brotherhood of Heliopolis.

It was Dujols' death in April 1926 that cleared the way for Champagne to incorporate the notes of his friend into the body of *The Mystery of the Cathedrals*. This was something of a final straw for Dujols' widow Yvonne, who had been previously quite friendly and sympathetic to the alchemic illustrator. She withdrew from all contact with Champagne and his circle at this point and passed his personal alchemic research journals to Champagne's pupil Eugene Canseliet.

An example of the Green Language system, so characteristic of Pierre Dujols, contained in the text of *The Mystery of the Cathedrals*, can be intuited in Fulcanelli's treatment of the alchemic term *Sel* - more ordinarily translated as 'Salt' in English.

## Steven Ashe

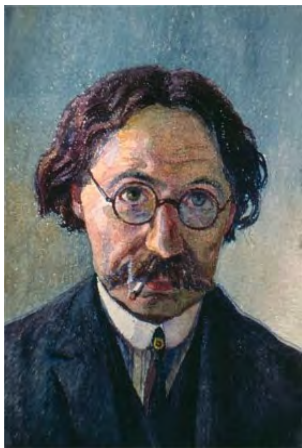
Here we find the term interpreted as a homophone of *Scel* which translates as *Seal*.

Pierre Dujols' health had deteriorated some thirty years prior to his death and he had become sporadically bed ridden, sometimes previously for years on end.

During these periods he came to rely upon Champagne as the courier of charitable gifts of money from admirers. Champagne, a talented and classically trained Artist, was also an alcoholic who sometimes spent the money en route.

The bed-ridden scholar would however devote endless hours in the company of Champagne to discussing the finer points of the alchemic method. In 1914 he had assembled and published the *Mutus Liber*, now regarded as a classic of Alchemic erudition. Dujols shared a passion for the medieval period with Champagne and also an abiding fascination with the Alchemic lore surrounding Basil Valentine and France's most legendary Alchemist Nicholas Flamel.

## **Rosicrucians & Alchemist of La Belle Époque**



**Jean Julien Champagne by his pupil Eugene Canseliet**

Champagne had gained quite a reputation amongst the Hermetic intelligentsia of the day. His extraordinary talent for visionary draughtsmanship combined with his evident artistic talents led to his gaining lucrative design contracts for the de Lesseps family. He was placed in charge of the revolutionary high-tech design of a turbo powered propeller system intended for a polar sled. He also undertook the developmental design of a future model farm built with the de

**Steven Ashe**

Lesseps' money.

Champagne's renowned skill in the material science of Metallurgic Alchemy lay behind his initial introduction to the de Lesseps who also frequented the esoteric gatherings organised by Dujols' Bookstore of the Marvellous.

The canal builder's sons offered Champagne the regular use of a chemical laboratory and in 1911 even hosted Champagne in the de Lesseps mansion as a house guest whilst he continued his experimental alchemic spagyrics and work upon the polar sled, on a stipend of 500 Francs per month. On this income, Champagne lived the high life of Salon society amidst the sunset years of La Belle Époque.

In 1913, whilst wining and dining at Closerie Delilas cafe in Montparnasse, Champagne by chance met with Rene Schwaller, a young man nine years his junior and a fellow artist of sober disposition.



## **Rosicrucians & Alchemist of La Belle Époque**

The two were as different as chalk and cheese and although relations between them were friendly, they were never friends. Schwaller had been a pupil of the Artist Matisse and it is likely that a certain rivalry stood between the Bohemian Champagne and the quietly erudite Schwaller.



**De Lesseps & Jean Julien Champagne  
& the Propellor for the Polar Sled**

Champagne had taken on professional responsibilities as a book-valuer and archivist for the Chacornac brothers' bookstore, having been recommended for

## Steven Ashe

this post by his friend Dujols. It was whilst performing these duties that he came upon a six page document inserted into a rare and collectable volume dealing with Alchemy, written by Isaac Newton. This partially coded manuscript alleged to be the journal of an Alchemist who had successfully discovered the methods of producing the red and blue stained-glass of the Rose window of Chartres Cathedral; a mysterious process which had resisted the study of the great minds of the ages.

The wily alchemist had clandestinely appropriated the manuscript and spent fruitless years in experimental frustration attempting to uncover its secrets. At the time of their fateful meeting, Schwaller's reputation was on the rise. His first book *A Study of Numbers* was in pre-production by the Press associated with L'Art Independent Bookshop.

René Schwaller's studies had led him to a deep study of the symbolism of the Gothic Cathedrals; especially Notre Dame, which he visited regularly. His work *A Study of*

## **Rosicrucians & Alchemist of La Belle Époque**

*Numbers* relied intimately upon the geometric harmony of the medieval masterpieces in stone.

Champagne, knowing of Schwaller's reputed brilliance in chemistry, and no doubt aware of his fortune and business success, arranged to show the younger man sample pages from the manuscript. Schwaller had gained financial independence from rewards gained through his shrewd handling of the financial affairs of Louis Allainguillaume, a wealthy coal merchant.

Generous dividends were granted to Schwaller allowing him to provide the opportunistic Champagne with a stipend similar to that obtained from the de Lesseps and which would continue to be paid for the next seventeen years. The partnership would, at the agreement of both parties, remain completely secret. Schwaller took possession of the manuscript and agreed to decode its secrets. Champagne agreed to perform the laboratory work using medieval alchemic methods.

## Steven Ashe

The outbreak of World War in 1914 saw Schwaller mobilised into research science on behalf of the military. His scientific background led to a wartime career engaged in nutritional research, whilst he maintained a correspondence with Champagne in which he revealed piecemeal the secrets of the processes discussed in the manuscript. Champagne laboured in the de Lesseps laboratory, testing Schwaller's theories.

René Schwaller continued to be active in Parisian occult circles, frequenting meetings of the Theosophical Society between 1913 and 1916. It was whilst attending these meetings that he closely befriended the Lithuanian nobleman and poet Oscar Vladislav de Lubicz Milosz (1877 - 1939). Both men were deeply fascinated by the symbolism of heraldry referred to each other as 'Brothers in Arms'.

The French Chemist introduced Milosz to the metaphorical treasures of Alchemy and, in turn, Milosz bestowed a knighthood and the right to bear his family's Coat of Arms on the re-christened René Schwaller de

## **Rosicrucians & Alchemist of La Belle Époque**

Lubicz.

Whilst spending his leisure hours intensely studying the mathematical, geometric and sculptural mysteries of Notre Dame, René Schwaller focused his incredible mind upon the task of bringing together some of the esoteric elite of the Parisian underground.

In 1917 he formed Les Vielleurs (The Watchers); an intellectual and social initiative supported by the aristocratic Oscar V. Milosz; the influential Carlos Larronde, and associate of Milosz and founder of the *Theatre Idealiste*; the wealthy coal magnate Louis Allainguillaume and his wife Jeanne Germaine.

Jean Germaine would eventually marry Schwaller, some ten years later upon the death of her husband. She became known as a mediumistic spiritual seer and visionary who published many books upon the spiritual lore of ancient Egypt under the mystical name of *Isha*.

Schwaller had hijacked the cream of the Theosophical Society's elite, even enticing

## Steven Ashe

the editor of *Le Theosophe* to change its name to *Le Veilleur*. The name was taken from the title of an unpublished novel *Les Veilleurs de la Nuit* (The Watchers of the Night) by Nicolas Beaudoin.



**Rene Schwaller's Ink Sketch of Fulcanelli**

## Rosicrucians & Alchemist of La Belle Époque



**Jean Germaine**  
in her sacred persona *Isha*

## Steven Ashe

Les Veilleurs met at a house once owned by Balzac and articles published by the order were signed in the name 'Aor', Schwaller's initiatory name which translates as Light. He was able to focus upon his spiritual interests thanks to the benevolence of his employer Allainguillaume and still amass considerable savings whilst paying a stipend to Champagne who had maintained a detailed and regular correspondence on the subject of their secret collaboration throughout the war years.

Champagne was a regular guest at the meetings held by Les Veilleurs and also at a number of other gatherings hosted by rival Hermetic bodies. After 1915, he was almost continually accompanied by the then sixteen year old scholar Greek literature Eugene Canseliet who had attached himself to the master as an apprentice.

Canseliet would prove to be central to the Fulcanelli affair, and a major catalyst to the historical mystification of the identity of Fulcanelli throughout the twentieth century. He was introduced to the opulent high



## **Rosicrucians & Alchemist of La Belle Époque**

society who met at the home of the De Lesseps, and to the circle who attended Pierre Dujols to study the Green Language of Cabala.



**Eugene Canseliet**

A keen student of Alchemic symbolism and something of a genius in the disciplines of artistic calligraphy, Eugene Canseliet gained great respect amongst his peers for his reproductions of ancient alchemic manuscripts held in Parisian libraries.

The tight circle comprising the core group of Les Veilleurs met in private and published through the agency of its magazine for three years, before flirting with

## Steven Ashe

a more public initiative from 1920 for just over a year. This was to prove a short lived experiment, for in 1921 Schwaller closed the group and began to prepare to move with his close disciples to Switzerland where in 1922 he founded a semi monastic scientific community, replete with an astronomical observatory and several laboratories.

This community was known as Suhalia and here René Schwaller de Lubicz instructed his students in his own philosophies and engaged in homeopathic alchemic studies and plant pharmacopoeia producing Tinctures.

Schwaller was to spend seven years in Switzerland on the Suhalia project, but in 1921 prior to his departure he loaned Champagne his manuscript on the mysteries of the medieval cathedrals after the older man promised to look it over with a view to finding a publisher.

Champagne kept the manuscript for several days and copied it in his own hand before returning it to Schwaller with a cautious

## **Rosicrucians & Alchemist of La Belle Époque**

warning that it revealed too many secrets.

Whilst Rene Schwaller occupied himself with his Swiss project, Jean Julien Champagne shared Schwaller's insights on cathedral architecture and symbolism with Pierre Dujols taking care not to reveal the true identity of its originator. Champagne's pupil Canseliet was privy to the results of the collaboration between his master and Dujols under the impression that the wisdom was filtering through Champagne from his own master, the mysterious Fulcanelli.

The existence of Fulcanelli was a fiction scrupulously maintained by Champagne who had gathered around him a dedicated coterie of students of Alchemy including Jules Boucher and the remnants of the society meetings who gathered at Edmond Bailly's bookstore L'Art Independent as well as pupils of Dujols such as Faugeron. All of whom remained as oblivious of Champagne's association with Schwaller.

Champagne even went so far as to stipulate that Schwaller should never meet him in the

**Steven Ashe**

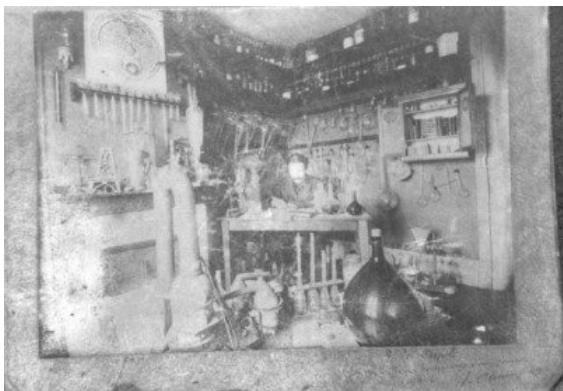
presence of any of his disciples.

Together with Pierre Dujols, Champagne reconstructed Schwaller's notes and expanded them to include Dujol's theories on phonetic Cabala based on the supposed Greek origins of the French language.

Canseliet was drafted to help organise the work, a task his academic qualifications as a Bachelor graduate of Greek literature proved him well suited for. He was also to be encouraged to write a preface for the work which was to be published as Fulcanelli's *Mystery of the Cathedrals*.

Whilst Dujols continued to labour on the work of supplementing Schwaller's Gothic study completely unaware of the true provenance of the work, Champagne provided illustrations and alchemical obfustifications. The extensive supplementary notes compiled by Dujols from this period until his death in 1926, just prior to the appearance of *The Mystery of the Cathedrals* were to comprise the main body of Fulcanelli's sequel to the work *The*

**Rosicrucians & Alchemist of La Belle Époque**  
*Dwellings of the Philosophers* in 1930.



**Pierre Dujols**  
**in Champagne's Alchemic Laboratory**

The stylistics of the two works are so different as to highlight Schwaller's original literary skeleton for *The Mystery of the Cathedrals* from Dujols more easily identifiable style. Those familiar with the later Egyptological studies of René Schwaller de Lubicz will find much that resonates with the study of geometric symbolism to be found in *The Mystery of the*

**Steven Ashe**

*Cathedrals.*

Jean Schemit's first edition of 1926, illustrated by Champagne caused a major stir amongst the Parisian occult underground, despite being limited to 300 copies in hardback. Schwaller's surprise at finding his manuscript and its novel ideas in print were matched by a sardonic amusement. He told later biographer André Vendenbroek "I've been taken by Fulcanelli, my ideas have been taken; well ... at least now it's written down."

Schwaller continued to fund Champagne's attempts to create the metal tinctured stained glass of Chartres, despite the theft of his literary labours and the Alchemist's frustrating failures in the de Lessep's laboratories.

In the six years remaining of Champagne's life, dramatic changes would bring great success and also fatal tragedy.

## Rosicrucians & Alchemist of La Belle Époque



Champagne's design for the cover of *Mutus Liber*

### The New Rosicrucians

Stanislas de Guaita laid down the roots of post modern French Rosicrucianism in 1888 when he founded the Kabbalistic Order of Rosicrucians with Joséph Peladan, a well

## **Steven Ashe**

known novelist and Martinist.

De Guaita had written to Peladan after reading one of his esoteric novels, and met him in Paris after moving to the city from his native Italy. Stanislas de Guaita was of noble birth and his family had access to great wealth. His luxury apartment in Paris became the meeting place for poets, writers, mystics and philosophers to be seen and admired. During the early 1880s de Guaita had published two cycles of mystical verse *The Dark Muse* (1883) and *The Mystic Rose* (1885) which had established his reputation in literary and esoteric circles. Together with Peladan he undertook to resurrect and reformulate the ancient Order of Rosicrucians.



## Rosicrucians & Alchemist of La Belle Époque



**Stanislas de Guita**

To this end they recruited Gerald Encausse (Papus), a medical doctor of great intellect and original insight who authored respected articles and books on Tarot cards, the Qabalah and Rosicrucian Themes. Encausse had joined the Parisian Ahathoor lodge of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn and advanced rapidly through its ranks.

Prior to this, Papus had been consecrated as a Bishop in the l'Église Gnostique (Gnostic Church) in 1893 by Jules Doinel, a librarian from Carcassonne, who had founded the church three years previously in an effort to revive the early protestant

## Steven Ashe

religion of the Cathars. This initiative had succeeded in provoking an outcry from the Vatican who issued a written declamation against the movement. Papus would become one of a Bishopric Triumvirate which was to rule the Church after Doinel's resignation in 1895. Drawing upon their combined experience and knowledge these three men constructed an organisation which offered instruction in the hermetic sciences. This proved to be a popular move, for the ranks of the new Rosicrucian Order soon swelled with an increasingly expanding membership and lodges throughout France.

De Guaita's fame continued to rise and he found himself being styled the Prince of the Rosicrucians.

The year 1888 is not only notable for the founding of the Rosicrucian Order. It was during this year that Papus began to publish his influential journal *L'Initiation* and de Guaita began a bitter and protracted war of Magic against a rival occultist whose practices reeked of the Satanic orgy: the Abbé Boullan.

## **Rosicrucians & Alchemist of La Belle Époque**

Abbé Boullan was a defrocked Catholic priest with a perverse approach to the celebration of the hermetic mysteries. Experimenting in attempts to contact the world of Spirit, Boullan employed the talents of an impressionable young lady in his care, Mary Roché, as a Spirit Medium. At the discretion of her inner plane contacts, he formed a school of spiritual initiation called the society for the reparation of souls.

Boullan had developed a theory he termed Mystical Substitution in which he encouraged his followers on the path of Sin.

As Sin was finite, as opposed to the infinite goodness of God, the Abbé directed his acolytes to take as much sin onto themselves as they could stand in order to spare their brothers and sisters in the outer world from the burden.

This of course led to the kind of free-for-all sexual mayhem the most depraved minds can imagine. The novelist Huysmans goes some way to describing the orgiastic ceremonies overseen by the Abbé Boullan

**Steven Ashe**

in his book 'La Bas' (Down There).

Huysmans was a close friend of Abbé Boullan and when, in 1888, a deep magical feud developed between Boullan and Stanislas de Guaita, Huysmans perversely turned the tables of de Guaita and chose to depict him as the evil magician as opposed to a heroic portrayal of Boullan. The cause of the historical feud which developed between the two occultists lay in de Guaita's discovery of the nature of the magic which Abbé Boullan was engaged in.

The Parisian occult underground at this time was vibrant, but embryonic. That the paths of Stanislas de Guaita and Boullan should cross is not surprising. Salons and cafe's where those inclined towards the Arts, Philosophy and the Occult were beginning to spring up everywhere. The Chat Noir (Black Cat) Cafe was haunted by the great thinkers of the day. Papus, Ferdinand de Lesseps, Emma Calve, Jean Julien Champagne, Jules Bois and, later, Aleister Crowley were regular attendees. Other meeting places included the homes of

## **Rosicrucians & Alchemist of La Belle Époque**

wealthy and esoteric minded patrons of the Arts such as Countess Gaston de Adhémar who offered an open house on Wednesday evenings. From 1889, Georges Poirel hosted Thursday evening dinner parties for the esoteric elite.

Stanislas de Guaita had been formerly introduced to Boullan at such an occasion. However, a deeper acquaintance with his methodology gave de Guaita the shivers. He attacked the Abbé in a series of thinly disguised set of caricatures in articles and books. He also let it be known that he had launched a Thought Form to haunt Boullan on the Astral Plane and bring about his demise.

Boullan wasted no time in marshaling as much protective occult energy with the help of his drunken, drugged, self mutilating, sexually sado-masochistic ritual companions.

Consulting Mary Roche, his Spirit Medium, Boullan learned that Stanislas de Guaita had raised a spirit to poison him upon

## **Steven Ashe**

the Astral Plane in the form of a microbe which would end his life.

Clearly, this was a time of high paranoia and glamour in the lives of both of these occultists. They each reported horrific ghostly visitations in the night and seemed to spend serious amounts of time plotting against one another.

Jules Bois, at this time the editor of L'Art Independant's journal La Haute Science and L'Etoile, was a supporter of Boullan and challenged de Guaita to a duel.

This challenge was accepted and pistols were chosen for the occasion. Fortunately for both combatants, each missed the other and they survived.

## Rosicrucians & Alchemist of La Belle Époque



**Jules Bois and J.K. Huysmans**

When the Abbé Boullan died peacefully in his sleep in January 1893 de Guaita no doubt felt a wave of relief that this ghastly business which had dragged on for nearly five years had finally ended.

By this time, the many members of de Guaita's Kabbalistic Order of Rosicrucians shared an affiliation with the new Martinist movement initiated mainly by Papus and Peladan in 1890. Stanislas de Guaita himself sat upon the Supreme Council of this organisation. Martinism sought to revive the spiritual teachings of Louis Claude Saint Martin (1743 – 1803) who

**Steven Ashe**

wrote under the pen name 'The Unknown Philosopher'.



**Dr Gerald Encausse (Papus)**

Martinism arose in the wake of what has been termed the Anti-Masonic period of France's history (1884 – 1896) which arose after the publication of an encyclical by Pope Leo XIII entitled *Humanum Genus* which claimed the human race was



## **Rosicrucians & Alchemist of La Belle Époque**

"separated into two diverse and opposite parts, of which the one steadfastly contends for truth and virtue, the other of those things which are contrary to virtue and to truth. The one is the kingdom of God on earth, namely, the true Church of Jesus Christ... The other is the kingdom of Satan..." According to Leo XIII this 'kingdom of Satan' was led and directed by Freemasonry. Of course, this claim provoked a healthy outcry against Freemasonry and secret societies in general.



**Joseph Peladan**

Certainly the most audacious response to

## Steven Ashe

the Catholic Church's campaign against Freemasonry was Leo Taxil's famous practical joke which had all France aflame with conspiracy theory at the expense of both Freemasonry and the Church between 1890 and 1897: the Palladist Hoax.

Leo Taxil was the pen name of Marie Joseph Gabriel Antoine Jogand-Pagès who was a Hoaxer of the highest order. The staging of practical jokes on an epic scale were the very breath of life itself to Taxil. He had come to public attention through his anti-catholic writings of which the most notable was *La Bible Amusante* which highlighted inconsistencies and absurdities in the Christian Bible. In 1879 Taxil had even been tried at the Seine Assizes for the crime of insulting a religion in his work *À Bas la Colotte* (Down with the Cloth). He was acquitted. He had even been accused of libel for writing *The Secret Loves of Pope Pius IX*.

In 1885, Taxil claimed to have a spiritual revelation and made a surprise conversion to Roman Catholicism and disavowed his

**Rosicrucians & Alchemist of La Belle Époque**  
previous hostility to the religion.



**Marie Joseph Gabriel Antoine Jogand-Pagès  
(Leo Taxil)**

He went on to write a series of anti-Freemasonic propaganda on behalf of the Church that were lavishly disguised practical jokes at her expense.

In 1891 he published a book under the pen name Dr Bataille entitled *Le Diable au XIX Siècle* (The Devil in the 19th Century) which claimed to have uncovered a modern Satanic Freemasonic lodge working in Paris known as the Palladists. In this book we are introduced to Diana Vaughan, a Satanic priestess of the Palladins who had Astral Plane intercourse with demons including an entity which manifested in the implausible

**Steven Ashe**

yet hilarious form of a crocodile which played the piano.

According to A.E. Waite writing in *Devil-Worship in France, or The Question of Lucifer* (London 1896) and citing the writings of Domenico Margiotta and Dr Bataille: "The Order of Palladium founded in Paris 20 May 1737 or Sovereign Council of Wisdom" was a Masonic Diabolic Order."

## Rosicrucians & Alchemist of La Belle Époque



A Contemporary Poster  
Advertising Leo Taxil's Works

## Steven Ashe

Writing as Bataille, Taxil claimed the contemporary Palladist Order was Satanic and controlled from their global headquarters in Charleston in the USA where they were led by the high ranking American Freemason Albert Pike.

This caused something of a stir in both esoteric salons and society in general and Leo Taxil continued to issue books and pamphlets to sustain the myth. In 1895, writing as Diana Vaughan he published *Confessions of an Ex-Palladist*, the supposed biography of a female ex member of this orgiastic Satanic cult. This caused a sensation and the press called upon Taxil to produce Diana Vaughan, which he agreed to do at a special press conference he called in 1897. At this event, Taxil came clean with the press and admitted that all his anti-Freemasonic writings had been hoaxes and expressed his thanks to the Catholic establishment for their help in giving exposure to his outrageous fictions. He also informed them that Diana Vaughan was the last in a long line of Hoaxes and practical

## **Rosicrucians & Alchemist of La Belle Époque**

jokes he had engineered beginning with his persuading the Commandant of Marseille that the city's harbour was infested with sharks, resulting in a ship being sent out to exterminate them. Following this he had announced the discovery of an underwater city beneath Lake Geneva which straddles the border of Switzerland and France. This drew archeologists and journalists to the site and caused a boom in the local tourism industry. Diana Vaughan was found to be the name of a typist he had employed who considered the whole affair something of a hoot.

Papus had received his Martinist initiation from Henri Delage who claimed to have received his authority from Saint Martin himself.

Fellow members of de Guaita's Rosicrucian Order who also involved themselves in Martinism included Charles Barlet, Paul Adam, Lucien Lejay, Chamuel, Sedir and Tarot designer Oswald Wirth. Edmond Bailly opened the doors of his bookshop L'Art Independant to them for

## Steven Ashe

meeting space. Contemporaneous to this. Thanks to the growing homogenous mix of Parisian occult society, members of many diverse paths took the opportunity to come together as a community at the invitation of Papus, Peladan and Charles Barlet to form the Independent Group for Esoteric Studies.

This amalgamated initiative commenced its existence on December 7<sup>th</sup>, 1889. In 1894 it changed its name to the *Ecole Hermétique* and its influence increased after Papus persuaded Chamuel to open his Bookstore of the Marvellous a few doors away where overspill classes and lectures could be organised.



## **Rosicrucians & Alchemist of La Belle Époque**

### **The Magicians of Le Grande Lunaire**

Of all the esoteric societies popular in France during the early twentieth century, the strangest and most sinister was known as Le Grande Lunaire.

According to Eugene Canseliet, speaking to the author Robert Amadou in the 1950s, Jean Julien Champagne was a member of this group as was Jules Boucher, the chemist Gaston Sauvage and a certain Dr Rouhier who was an intimate member of the circle surrounding Pierre Dujols as well as being a Director of the influential Vega Bookstore and publishing house.

The affairs of Le Grande Lunaire were secret and encompassed the wide spectrum of esoterica from the diabolic and black magic section of the group run by Gaston Sauvage to the sexual magic of the Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor of Charles Barlet, inherited from the teachings of the American P.B. Randolph. The writings of René Schwaller and the published works of

## **Steven Ashe**

Aleister Crowley also formed a key part of the group's curriculum.

Eugene Canseliet also referred to the affairs of Le Grande Lunaire in his conversations with Martinist and Freemasonic writer Robert Amadou when he talked of a deplorable collaboration his master Champagne had been dragged into.

Jules Boucher had been introduced to Champagne by the Artist's cousin who worked with Boucher as a chemist. The small group of Alchemic devotees who accepted Champagne as their master called themselves the Brotherhood of Heliopolis and welcomed Boucher into their midst.

## Rosicrucians & Alchemist of La Belle Époque



**Jules Boucher**

He remained a close trustee of this circle until Champagne's death in 1932, although he left the membership of Le Grande Lunaire in something of a funk over the prevalence of sex and the use of visionary narcotics as a focus of the group's *raison d'être*. Boucher, whose interests were more intellectual according to Canseliet, "often went at night (with Rouhier) to the Dolmen of Meudon, armed with their portable *occultum* from Le Grande Lunaire." Upon resigning from the company of the group, Jules Boucher was mercilessly terrorised by

## Steven Ashe

Gaston Sauvage and the other members. He was even subject to a ritual curse, feeling it necessary to seek an exorcism from a Bishop of the Gnostic Catholic Church.

Whatever bad feeling arose from this affair, from Canseliet's testimony, Champagne, felt some remorse. Until his death, the Artist's concierge reported only three regular visitors: Canseliet, Boucher and the sinister Gaston Sauvage.

The latter was close enough in Champagne confidence to be a witness to a successful transmutation performed by Canseliet under the watchful eye of his master at the Paris Gasworks Laboratories in 1922.

The aforementioned Dr Rouhier's interest in Hermetic ritual and Celtic Dolmens was supplemented by a more exotic interest: the employment of hallucinogenic plants to obtain visions. In 1928 he published the first encyclopedic work upon the topic to be published in the West: *Peyote - The Plant Which Brings Marvels to the Eyes*.

Rouhier was the commercial Director of

## **Rosicrucians & Alchemist of La Belle Époque**

the Vega Bookstore and an associate of Papus and Oswald Wirth, both published authorities on the Kabbalistic Tarot.

In the years 1927 to 1930 the owner of Vega Bookstore, Madame Dina, was intimately involved with Rene Guenon - an occultist and Rosicrucian whose work had been vastly influential throughout the Rosicrucian Freemasonic movement. Madame Dina was the heiress to one of America's largest fortunes. She had married the deeply respected authority upon eastern religions who styled himself *Dina*. Of Indian origin, Dina was a successful electrical engineer who turned his fortune, and that of his bride, to the pursuit of Alchemy and the mystical lore of the elder faiths.

Dina was the author of *La Science Philosophique* which appeared in 1917 under the pen name AMA, and also *La Destiny: La Morte et ses Hypotheses* (Destiny, Death and their Hypotheses) which was published shortly before his death in 1927. With the help of his wife,

## **Steven Ashe**

Dina undertook the architectural transformation of Chateau Avenieres at Cruseilles near Annecy, converting the chapel into a temple dedicated to Tarot icons. This was one of two Chateau owned by the Dinas which they had decorated with sculptural reliefs of the images to be found in the traditional Tarot cards.



**Chateau Avenieres**

René Schwaller was a great devotee of Dina, having been introduced to his work at meetings organised by the Martinist and Rosicrucian groups who frequented L'Art Independent where students of Papus mingled with artists from the symbolist

## **Rosicrucians & Alchemist of La Belle Époque**

movement. The composer Claude Debussy was a regular attendant as was the singer Emma Calve who was the lover of Jules Bois who edited the bookstores magazines in addition to being a close confidant of Papus.



**A Tarot Image from Chateau Avenieres**

After her husband's death, Madame Dina gave the commercial directorship of Vega to Rene Guenon, a rival of Papus in the Rosicrucian and Freemasonic underground.

## Steven Ashe

Rene Guenon had commenced his esoteric education attending courses run by Papus' *Ecole Hermétique* (Hermetic School). This was a front window for the Rosicrucian movement run by F Ch Barlet and Papus.

Guenon swiftly moved into the limelight, devouring as much mystical lore as he could lay his hands upon. Thirty years later his name became known as an international authority on the traditional mysticism of the major world faiths. He also became a convert to Islamic Shi'ite Sufism and made his home in Cairo living as a recluse. So much so, that his neighbour of two decades who was a great fan of his written work was, upon his death, highly surprised to discover the true identity of the man who had been living next door to her.

Until that time, Guenon's name became linked to high ranking Freemasonry. He inherited the charters and papers of the Rosicrucian supremo F Ch Barlet, much to the annoyance of Papus, who disputed the succession.



## **Rosicrucians & Alchemist of La Belle Époque**

The Rosicrucian tradition to which René Guenon found himself heir apparent was not at all one of mere lip service to the formulaic mumbo jumbo that passes as 'trade journal' Rosicrucianism nowadays.

Charles Barlet, the pseudonym of Albert Faucheux, had been a close associate of Max Theon (1848 -1927) whose influence upon the western mystery tradition has been vastly understated in the histories.

Theon had once been a close associate, some even say teacher of Helena Petrova Blavatsky. They had parted ways, after travelling through Egypt together, over a disagreement upon the overt teaching of practical magic which Theon intended to extend into the public domain. Blavatsky was a Mystic and more inclined to a sympathy towards the spiritual qualities of the religious devotions of the ancient East.

Theon was a Theurgist with a deep passion for the mysteries of the West; encompassing the entire spectrum of Gnostic and Qabalistic thought later associated with the

## **Steven Ashe**

French schools of Papus and Stanislas de Guaita and the teachings of the British Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn.

In 1870, Max Theon founded the Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor in Egypt which, at its peak, boasted some thirty thousand members. According to an official document of the Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor, written by Peter Davidson whom Theon trusted to run the organisation whilst he remained in the background as symbolic chief., Theon claimed to have been initiated into a Rosicrucian lodge during a visit to England.

## Rosicrucians & Alchemist of La Belle Époque



**Max Theon**

At this time Theon and Davidson were engaged in a war of words with Madame Blavatsky's Theosophical Society. Only a year after the birth of the British section of the Order, the prosecution of one of its leading officers, Thomas Henry Burgoyne, for fraud inspired the Theosophists to point to this as an example of inherent evil at work inside the Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor.

In turn, Peter Davidson attacked the Theosophical Society in print as spiritually

**Steven Ashe**

unhealthy due to a “Buddhist cult influence.”

The inner teachings of the style of Rosicrucianism inherited by René Guenon through Barlet, who had himself obtained them from Max Theon were the mysteries of sexual magic.

This was the sexual magic of P.B. Randolph, an incredibly gifted creole African American born in 1825 who wrote over fifty books and innumerable articles on Spiritism and the Occult under the pen name The Rosicrucian. He was to found the first genuine Rosicrucian Masonic lodge in the United States of America: The Fraternitis Rosae Crucis.

Randolph had an early exposure to the fetishistic hoodoo of the African American slaves thanks to his family roots on his mother's side. Barely entering his teens, he secured a berth in the merchant navy and travelled widely in the East, as far as Persia. Randolph's lust for esoteric knowledge led him to seek out holy men wherever he found

## **Rosicrucians & Alchemist of La Belle Époque**

himself ashore and he soaked up mystical teachings from Sufis; Zoroastrians and Fakirs alike.



***P.B. Randolph***

Returning to America, he began to write and publish with vigour upon all aspects of the spiritual mysteries. He also lectured widely, even gaining a rising reputation from a side career as a stage Trance Medium.

Earning enough money through his efforts to put himself through medical school, Randolph qualified as a Doctor and shortly after, in 1851, befriended Abraham Lincoln.

## Steven Ashe

He was selected to accompany the funeral procession of the Lincoln by train to Springfield, Illinois in 1865, but was asked to disembark from the train when passengers motivated by racism objected to the presence of an African American amongst them.

Randolph's greatest claim to notoriety lay in the fact that he was the first individual to introduce the notion of sex as a spiritual path to the American public. His standing in the community as a medical doctor allowed him to approach the subject of the qualities of human sexual relations from a health oriented position of social acceptability.

Randolph maintained the sexual union of a man and his wife to be a sacred marriage during which the interplay of harmonic polarities of the male and the female create an energy which is, at the same time, a sacrament. His writings show strong evidence of genuine Tantric lore and technique which can only have been gained firsthand during his early extensive travels in the East.

## **Rosicrucians & Alchemist of La Belle Époque**

The writings of Randolph upon sexual magic were popular in both the USA and France. Randolph had undertaken the French translation himself, being bilingual.

The idea of spirituality expressed in sexual terms appealed to the open minded French of the late nineteenth century. Randolph's ideas were eagerly incorporated into Theon's Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor over one hundred years later and popularised further by the advocacy of Charles Barlet.

In Germany, the teachings of Randolph were adopted by Karl Kelner who founded another cult of sex magicians known as the Ordo Templi Orientis (Order of Eastern Templars) and also Rudolph Steiner who briefly flirted with the OTO early in the twentieth century. Interestingly, Papus was later honoured with the grade of 10<sup>th</sup> Degree OTO membership by Theodore Reuss, after meeting him at the International Masonic Conference in 1908, despite Papus being at that time an outsider to the Masonic Craft, despite having himself organised the conference.

## Steven Ashe

Randolph's teachings in turn influenced the British occultist Aleister Crowley who was a regular visitor to Paris, although Crowley's application of Randolph's ideas were taboo breaking and unorthodox.

By 1908, Guenon had captivated the hearts and minds of the younger students of the Hermetic School. At a series of mediumistic trance seances held at the school, the spirit masters called for him to become leader of an esoteric school they wished to see founded. This was to be called 'The Order of the Temple Renewed.'



René Guenon

The founding of this order was regarded



## **Rosicrucians & Alchemist of La Belle Époque**

by Papus with hostility, resulting in René Guenon being blacklisted by Papus and his Martinist associates. Guenon's meteoric rise through the higher grades of Freemasonry gave him great influence and Papus' own admission to the ranks of the Craft Brotherhood was, in later years, delayed due to the intervention of supporters of Guenon.

In 1930, accompanied by Madame Dina, René Guenon traveled to Egypt to collect Sufi texts for publication by Vega. Madame Dina had been somewhat enamored with Guenon, living outside of wedlock with him for several months at the Chateau Avinieres. Her return from Cairo preceded his due to an extended need for further research in the libraries of Cairo on his part.

Attending a soirée at the home of Dr Rouhier, Madame Dina met Ernest Britt and the pair fell in love and swiftly married. Britt, an esotericist of the Paris old school, loathed Guenon and used his influence to persuade his new bride to end all contact and financial support. Guenon's commercial directorship of the Vega Bookstore was

## Steven Ashe

handed over to Rouhier and Le Grande Lunaire found itself with a finger in every pie.

It would seem that the inner circle membership of Le Grande Lunaire also comprised the membership of the Brotherhood of Heliopolis; the circle of disciples gathered around Champagne. Gaston Sauvage was one of the only three known visitors at Champagne's garret in the final years of his life. The Charnoac brothers were also attendant at both groups as was the esoteric author Jules Boucher.

René Schwaller reportedly regarded Champagne and his school as overtly materialistic. He also regarded the theoretical Green Language of Pierre Dujols as an incomplete and deficient system which would be more profitably applied to the Egyptian language of hieroglyphs.

In Suhalia, Switzerland, Schwaller had been engineering the birth of Alchemic homeopathy. By 1929 he had returned to live in the south of France with Isha and her

## **Rosicrucians & Alchemist of La Belle Époque**

children, a boy and a girl. Champagne traveled to the Schwaller mansion, known as Plan-de-Grasse, spending a number of weeks resolving final problems standing in the way of their success. Many hours were spent in Schwaller's private chemical laboratory attempting to replicate the blue and red stained glass of the Rose window of Chartres Cathedral.

An avenue leading to Plan-de-Grasse was subsequently renamed Allee des Philosophers (Philosophers Walk) to commemorate these conversational evening walks during which the Philosopher and the Alchemist thrashed out their ideas.

These were the Dress Rehearsals for the main event. In the following year, under strict disciplines enforced by Schwaller, Champagne achieved the work of replicating the blue and the red stained glass of the medieval cathedrals.

## **Steven Ashe**



**Isha & Rene Swaller on their wedding day**

## **Rosicrucians & Alchemist of La Belle Époque**

### **The Materialists of the Metaphysical**

To view the popular interest in Spiritualism, Tarot Cards and associated Rosicrucian pursuits in Nineteenth Century France as simply a knee jerk reaction to the onslaught of the Age of Reason would be only partially revealing. Since the 1840s the philosophy of August Comte had been celebrated. Comte suggested that civilisation proceeds through three ages: the Theological, the Metaphysical and the Positivist. The latter being rooted in the empirical scientific method of experimentation and deductive reasoning.

In many ways the late 19th Century French revival of Magic was something of a last stand for the metaphysical age and closely linked to the Romantic and Symbolist movement in the Arts. A hundred years before, in 1871 the French occultist Court de Gebelin had originated the theory of a supposed link between the Tarot and the Egyptian hieroglyphica and gained an astonishingly wide readership for his monumental nine volume work entitled

**Steven Ashe**

*Monde Primitif.*

Only eighteen years later the Rosetta Stone was decoded revealing nothing concerning the mysteries of the Tarot glyphs. De Geblin's notions had by this time found fertile earth in the public imagination and his ideas and further appetite for Egyptian mysteries was stimulated by the French esotericists Paul Christian and Eliphas Levi.

It was Paul Christian who originated the term Arcana to describe the Tarot deck. He wrote seminal works on the Tarot and its esoteric symbolism which achieved a respectable popularity. Eliphas Levi developed the ideas of Court de Geblin; particularly, de Geblin's schema which sought to link the twenty two trumps of the Tarot with the twenty two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. The published works of these authors combined the mysteries of what August Comte termed the theological and metaphysical ages.

The advent of the Age of Positivism

## **Rosicrucians & Alchemist of La Belle Époque**

encouraged minds such as Schwaller and the Alchemist Dina to bring the focus of an empirical rationale to the elder mysteries. Dina, a physicist and electrical engineer, was revered by Schwaller who took on the magical name Aor Mahomet Ahlia to honour Dina who published under the mysterious initials A.M.A.

For some like Dina and Schwaller the new positivism was embraced as an unheralded opportunity to gain a new insight into traditional lore, particularly Alchemy.

Schwaller was a natural polymath whose precise mind was coupled with a kind and nurturing disposition. Something of a no less brilliant self-interested loner was precisely matched. Despite the many criticisms which may be levelled against Champagne for his self-indulgent alcoholic lifestyle, he was an expert laboratory technician. Having spent countless hours since his teenage years devoted to researching the practical aspects of Alchemic procedure, he had gained a reputation amongst his peers as a master of

**Steven Ashe**

laboratory know how.

Even so, Schwaller was shrewdly aware of the limits of his Alchemic partner's expertise, referring to Champagne years later as 'Another materialist.'

"I came in touch with the man quite naturally, as we were frequenting the same café, the Closerie des Lilas, in Montparnasse. This was before the First World War. ... I never took a liking to Fulcanelli, but he was the only one in Paris I could talk to about the Oeuvre [Alchemical Work]. He had a few disciples of sorts, a fellow named Boucher, I remember, and Eugène Canseliet, of course, who never left his side. ... He knew what he was doing, from a practical point of view. He was about ten years older than I, and rather well connected in the publishing world, or so he told me. But there were aspects he did not understand, theoretical aspects, what I call doctrine. ... He had made a technique of the proper gesture needed in the work, instead of leaving it to be divinely inspired, but what a technique! An unbelievable



## **Rosicrucians & Alchemist of La Belle Époque**

manipulator! This is valuable, of course, it is what makes the artist, but it does not make the philosopher. I guess he himself realized to what degree we complemented each other. He was a very strange fellow, a prankster, and he lived the Fulcanelli intrigue in all its details. ... He did not have the symbolique to express himself. He was still speaking in terms of Basil Valentine and Flamel or Jabir, but he himself had no specific form. And that was what I was able to give him.” Andre Vandebroek *Al-Kemi: A Memoir : Hermetic, Occult, Political, and Private Aspects of R.A. Schwaller De Lubicz* (Lindisfarne Books 1990).

During the 1950s Schwaller described to his biographer André Vandebroek how he had prescribed a rigorous and meticulous laboratory schedule for Champagne incorporating insights from his research into tinctures during his experiments at Suhalia, Switzerland. During 1930 Champagne's labours met with success. Schwaller took delivery of samples of the glass dyed in the

## Steven Ashe

metallic blues and reds of medieval cathedral glass and had them fashioned into a chandelier which hung above the dining room table at Plan-de-Grasse for many years.

In a letter to Champagne, reproduced in the 1957, 2nd edition of *The Mystery of the Cathedrals* Schwaller de Lubicz wrote: “My old friend, this time you have truly received God’s gift; it is a great grace and for the first time I understand how rare this favour is. I consider in fact that within the unfathomable depths of simplicity, the Arcanum cannot be found by the force of Reason alone, no matter how subtle or trained the reason may be. At last, you have the treasure of treasures, and let us give thanks to the divine light that has made you a participant in it. You have, by the way, justly deserved it through your unshakeable trust in truth, your constancy of effort, your perseverance in sacrifice and also, let us not forget, .... through your good works.

“When my wife told me the good news I was dumbfounded by joyful surprise and I

## **Rosicrucians & Alchemist of La Belle Époque**

was beside myself with happiness, so much so that I said to myself: Let's hope that this hour of intoxication is not paid for by some dreadful tomorrow. But although I was informed only in summary fashion of the event, I believe I have understood and this reassures me of the certainty that the fire does not die until the work is done and until the entire tinting mass impregnates the glass, which, from one decantation to the next remains absolutely saturated and becomes as luminous as the Sun."

The success of the experiment which had occupied Schwaller and Champagne for seventeen years marked the termination of the financial stipend paid by Schwaller to the Alchemist and the end of the contract between them; save for the agreement for discretion and secrecy.

A few months prior to the final success of their operation, Champagne had been invited back to Plan-de-Grasse to share in Schwaller's final insights. It seems apparent that Champagne was able to learn something practical of great value from his host. A

## Steven Ashe

disciple of Isha has described Aor as having himself performed the work of the final transmutation. It certainly seems highly probable that Schwaller had mastered an important practical stage of the work in the laboratory, for Champagne returned to Paris in a state of renewed vigour to repeat the success of this experiment in earnest.

During this period, Champagne withdrew from the world, even from his assistant Eugene Canseliet and other disciples amongst the Brotherhood of Heliopolis. However, the moment of success also signalled the beginning of the end for Champagne. Driven to the point of obsession with the need to replicate the success of the experiment at Plan-de-Grasse, the Alchemist worked himself to death fueled with Pernod, Absinthe and hallucinogenic drugs; finally contracting gangrene in the leg leading to his death.

Given the absence of contemporary standards of health and safety protocol, it is uncertain to what degree Champagne's laboratory experiments contributed to his

## **Rosicrucians & Alchemist of La Belle Époque**

accelerating ill health at this time. He began to walk with a limp, requiring a cane to move around before becoming permanently immobile and confined to his bed in his garret at 59A rue Rochechouart; attended only by his disciple Canseliet who shared an adjoining garret on the same floor as his master.

Before becoming completely invalided, Champagne made a decision to share the knowledge and history of the successful alchemic project undertaken with Schwaller amongst his students. Committed to break with the Hermetic silence concerning their collaboration insisted upon by Schwaller, Champagne wrote requesting a meeting with his long time benefactor.

Schwaller traveled to Paris in 1931 and met with Champagne in a restaurant on the outskirts of the city. Although the meeting was civil, Schwaller was dismayed to hear of Champagne's plan to reveal all and was forced to remind the Alchemist of their oath of secrecy.

## Steven Ashe

Champagne was tempted to remain silent by Schwaller's offer of a reinstatement of financial support. Certainly there was a measure of financial motive behind Champagne's maneuvers: his fondness for alcohol and mind altering resins, inhaled from a tin for the purpose of obtaining visions, required funding. Since monthly amounts provided by Schwaller had ceased, the Alchemist found himself in dire straights.

Whatever recompense for the Alchemist's silence was agreed at the meeting Champagne was still dissatisfied by the following Summer. In August 1932, he wrote to Schwaller again, this time citing a date upon which he intended to call a meeting of his disciples to reveal all.

Schwaller telegraphed ahead and rushed by train to Paris where he proceeded to Champagne's garret immediately upon alighting from his carriage. The dying Alchemist had gathered together all the correspondence received from Schwaller, the hand copied notes on Gothic architecture

## **Rosicrucians & Alchemist of La Belle Époque**

which had informed The Mystery of the Cathedrals and the copy of the found document detailing the metallic treatment of glass which had been the original focus of their collaboration.

"He [Fulcanelli] was already sick when he came here last time, limping somewhat and complaining of circulatory problems. And he persisted in this insane desire to come forth with whatever he thought he had understood. I reminded him again of his vow of secrecy and warned him that no good could come from breaking it. It was useless. Six weeks later he wrote me a line announcing a meeting he had scheduled for a limited group of adept friends: he was going to talk about our experiment." Reports Andre Vandenbroeck in *Al-Kemi: A Memoir : Hermetic, Occult, Political, and Private Aspects of R.A. Schwaller De Lubicz* (Lindisfarne Books 1990).

"He was turning black," Aor said almost inaudibly, all harmonics gone from the timbre of his voice, "and he could barely speak. Imagine he could no longer speak!

## Steven Ashe

We looked at each other for a long while, and then he shook his head. I think he understood. He pointed to a pile of papers on a bookshelf and had me look through them. I found the six pages of manuscript he had stolen and that we had been working with, the manuscript, I am convinced, that had brought us both to this moment. He made me understand that he wanted me to have it, and that no copy existed. I put it in my pocket and left. He was dead the next morning."

Schwaller must have been moved by pity at the sight of his associate. According to Vandenbroek, Schwaller recounted to him the deep sense of remorse he felt in Champagne's manner. He left the old Alchemist a gift of money, discovered by Champagne's sister Mrs Gaston Deveau upon visiting her brother the next morning to find him deceased. The find was much to her amazement as everyone knew Champagne had lived in penury for the final few months of his life.

Canseliet had shared an adjoining garret at



## **Rosicrucians & Alchemist of La Belle Époque**

59A rue de Rochechouart since January 1925 and it fell to him to put his master's affairs in order.

Despite living in close proximity, Champagne had kept many secrets from his pupil. Eugene Canseliet had been completely unaware of the true provenance of Fulcanelli's *The Mystery of the Cathedrals* and *The Dwellings of the Philosophers*. It was something of a shock for Canseliet to find the hand of Dujols undeniably delineated throughout both works and to discover evidence for Schwaller's original input into *The ... Cathedrals*.

By the following year, December 4th 1933, Canseliet had pieced the clues together and wrote to Schwaller concerning his unease upon finding out the extent to which he had been kept in the dark.

"Might it not be," he wrote "that Monsieur Champagne has once again shown, with respect to this material aspect of your work, a memory lapse that is as surprising as it is

## Steven Ashe

incomprehensible, or else an importunate discretion or perhaps an excessive reserve? Whatever it may be, I have not managed to banish the painful impression that has been left in me by unexpected events, by unsuspected facts that arise both at the end of his life and after his death and which gave rise to horrible scenes. I scarcely know how to determine whether these scenes were more disgusting than they were painful.”

Earlier in the letter Canseliet identifies the impact which Schwaller’s ideas had on Champagne, admitting to only recently having come upon Schwaller’s first book *Adam L’Homme Rouge* and “to have learned from it what our common friend had failed to tell me: that you are the author of this curious and scholarly work. You demonstrate profound knowledge at the juncture of the primitive androgynous state, as well as the highly philosophical concerns - in fact the same which gripped Monsieur Champagne upon his return from Plan-de-Grasse and that seemed to overturn his former notions.”

## **Rosicrucians & Alchemist of La Belle Époque**

Schwaller had always regarded Champagne as too much the materialist, according to his biographer Vandenbroek. Evidently the alchemist took to heart some of Schwaller's lessons in subtlety during his visits to Plan-de-Grasse, for the change in him and his *modus operandi* during the months following were marked and clear to behold.

A red ink portrait of Champagne sketched by Schwaller and annotated upon the reverse with the title *Fulcanelli* exists from 1930. Upon gaining access to Champagne's documents it did not take Canseliet long to piece together the threads of the tapestry with which his deceased master had woven the legend of *Fulcanelli*.

Champagne's tombstone and plot were paid for by Schwaller. A letter exists from the deceased's sister thanking Schwaller for his kindness.

Jacques Bergier, later the co-author of *The Morning of the Magicians* with Louis Pauwels, knowing he was dying of a terminal illness, confided to author Robert

## Steven Ashe

Amadou that Fulcanelli was René Schwaller de Lubicz. In *The Morning of the Magicians* Bergier describes a meeting between himself and Fulcanelli in a Parisian Gas laboratory in which the mysterious alchemist warned him of the dangers of a coming Atomic Age. Concern about Atomic research was a pet foible of Schwaller's. It would seem more genuine to consider Fulcanelli's identity as a composite of Schwaller, Dujols and Champagne. Canseliet later attempted to smudge the fine details with mythical stories which can at best be described as red herrings.

Concurrent with the renaissance of Alchemy and Rosicrucian practices in turn of the century Paris was the establishment of a lodge of the British Order of the Golden Dawn in the city. This was an order offering magical initiation into an assumed Rosicrucian tradition, led and administered by Samuel L Mathers and his wife Moina, sister of French philosopher and literary celebré Henri Bergson.

This lodge was known as Ahathoor No 7

### **Rosicrucians & Alchemist of La Belle Époque**

and included amongst its membership Jules Bois, Editor of L'Art Independent Bookshop's journal Étoile and author of *Petit Religions de Paris* (1884), *Satanisme et la Magic* (1895) and *Le Monde Invisible* (1902). The notorious English occultist Aleister Crowley received his grading of Minor Adept from Mathers in Paris during this period, when the London and some provincial lodges of the Golden Dawn were staging a coup against Mathers' autocratic rule over the Order.



**Moina Mathers**

## **Steven Ashe**

Samuel L Mathers styled himself with the Scottish dignification ‘MacGregor’ despite having no Scottish blood in him, having been born in Bournemouth, England and only visiting the Highlands once in his life.

Crowley caricatures him in Moonchild, constantly drunk on Scottish whiskey and slurring in an affected Highland dialect. However, at the turn of the century, Mathers and Crowley were close knit friends and magical allies. The autocratic leader of the Golden Dawn personally initiated the young rising star of the occult into the Adeptus Minor grade of Inner Order membership and dispatched him to London on an unsuccessful mission to seize control of the British headquarters of the Order.

## Rosicrucians & Alchemist of La Belle Époque



**Macgregor Mathers**

Aleister Crowley, a young and hyper intelligent heir to a brewing fortune had experienced an early awakening to esoteric enlightenment.

As a teenager, Crowley had discovered a passion for magic, poetry, rock climbing and mountaineering in order to escape an intellectually stultifying domestic home environment. He had been raised by a wealthy family of extreme Christian fundamentalists known as the Plymouth Brethren. Reading his account of his formative years in his autobiography *The*

## Steven Ashe

*Confessions of Aleister Crowley* it is surprising that the young man emotionally survived the harrowing abuse he suffered at the public schools his family paid for him to attend.

Crowley's father died while he was still a child. His mother, described by the occultist as a narrow minded bigot, nicknamed him 'the Beast of the Apocalypse' for exhibiting the kind of open and naive inquisitiveness expressed by every healthy child. The title 'The Beast' is one which has stuck. Crowley is often referred to by this name even today amongst his many followers and admirers.

Disappointed by the the narrow mindedness of the Christian orthodoxy, the young man developed an urge to explore the alternatives: Alchemy, Magic and Eastern lore.



## Rosicrucians & Alchemist of La Belle Époque



**Aleister Crowley**

It was during a mountaineering expedition in Switzerland that Crowley met Julian Baker, an analytical chemist and member of the Golden Dawn, who furnished the young man with a formal introduction to the group. Crowley had been expounding the theories of Alchemy aloud over evening drinks and, by chance or destiny, fell into conversation with the right man.

In the main, the membership of the Golden

## Steven Ashe

Dawn was well heeled and well connected, comprising of high ranking Freemasons, professionals and even literary giants such as W.B. Yeats. Maude Gonne, the theatre actress and mistress of both Yeats and George Bernard Shaw was also a member as was W. Wynn Westcott, a London coroner and leading light of the London Theosophical Society, who served as co-chief with Mathers for a number of years.

The Golden Dawn in London held their meetings at the Freemasonic Mark Masons Hall. It was there that Crowley was initiated into the Order ceremonially and where he met Allan Bennett who was a seminal influence upon him and who later founded the Western Order of Buddhists.

Whereas Crowley was a member of the economic elite, Bennett lived in near penury working as an electrical engineer. Despite his proletariat origins, Bennett was highly respected as a thinker and viewed as an authority on magic second only to Mathers. Like Crowley, he suffered from Asthma and this was exacerbated by slum living

## **Rosicrucians & Alchemist of La Belle Époque**

conditions.

The young mystical playboy took Bennett under his wing and installed him in his West End apartment where they studied magic and the Golden Dawn curriculum together. It was Allan Bennett who introduced Crowley to psychedelic drugs and morphine. Crowley rapidly advanced in his understanding of the Golden Dawn regime and they practiced both white and black magic in equal measure. Dion Fortune's work *Psychic Self Defence* gives a number of examples of demonic manifestations obtained as a result of Crowley and Bennett's magic of this period.

It was unfortunate that Aleister Crowley's rise through the outer order of the Golden Dawn occurred at the same time as the notorious schism which undermined Mather's authority and leadership of the British section of the group. Although Mathers initiated Crowley into the Rosicrucian Inner Order in Paris, the UK Golden Dawn refused to surrender the requisite documents of mystical teaching

## Steven Ashe

associated with the grade of Minor Adept to the new initiate. Crowley was nonplussed. He already had copies of the material from Bennett.

The mission he undertook from Mathers to act as his emissary in reasserting his authority in London ended in fiasco. Crowley, wearing full Highland dress and a black face mask attempted to change the locks of the London headquarters.

With the help of a bemused British policeman, W.B. Yeats and other officers of the London lodge expelled Crowley who felt sufficiently aggrieved to hire a notorious gang of roughnecks to harass Yeats and offer him violence.

Mathers and Crowley fell out of friendship soon after and the man destined to be hailed in years after as 'The Human Beast' and 'The Wickedest Man Alive' by the English Press did not return to Paris until 1903. In this year Crowley met Rodin who was at the pinnacle of his celebrity and who was much impressed with Crowley's self published

## **Rosicrucians & Alchemist of La Belle Époque**

poetry.

The Artist presented the young poet with seven watercolour sketches for a collaborative publication blending Crowley's verse with Rodin's images.

In the following year, in Cairo, Crowley and his wife Rose performed three magical rituals during which they contacted a superhuman intelligence called Aiwass who dictated three separate chapters of *The Book of the Law*: a work heralding a new age for mankind and announcing Crowley's role as a prophet for mankind.

Over the following decade, Crowley's interest in sex as an agent of magic and enlightenment grew. In his bi-annual journal *The Equinox* he cites the teachings of P.B. Randolph as source works.

Crowley's brother in law, the Artist Gerald Kelly introduced him to the writer Somerset Maugham who portrayed Crowley as the sinister main character of Oliver Haddo in his novel *The Magician*.

## Steven Ashe

This characterisation was based on Maugham's observations of Crowley's eccentricities during their meetings in Paris during the latter half of the twentieth centuries opening decade.

Perhaps the most serious and well documented attempt to apply P.B. Randolph's teachings on sexual magic occurred in Paris during 1913 when Aleister Crowley, assisted by the minor English poet Victor Neuberg, performed a series of homosexual *orgia* at a hotel in the city. The purpose of these rites, dedicated to Jupiter and Mercury, was to obtain wealth and literary inspiration and they have aptly been described as rites of banqueting and sexual exhaustion designed to stimulate visions.

Each of the sex magicians would take their turn at the male and female roles of the sexual act. Bodily fluids were treated as sacraments. The rites were infused with poetic invocation, incenses traditionally ascribed as harmonic to Jupiter and Mercury and banqueting palates to match.

## **Rosicrucians & Alchemist of La Belle Époque**

Gerald Yorke, an upper class British pupil and source of funds for Crowley described the Paris working of 1913 as “a serious attempt to perform magic: not simply a couple of homosexuals larking around.” Despite this, there are many proponents of the system of sexual magic brought to the West by P.B. Randolph who regard Crowley's approach to be perverse and dangerous.

The Paris Working itself produced little in the way of appreciable results, save promoting a bickering quarrel between Neuberg and Crowley.

Neuberg evidently did not take well to the sexual abuse meted out by his master and went on to have a nervous breakdown; splitting from Crowley and destined to spend the rest of his life avoiding him. He later wrote a regular column for the Sunday Referee London newspaper's Poetry Corner. He became an early admirer of the poetry of Dylan Thomas, whose work he had submitted for publication, and paid the young Welshman's train fare to London at

## Steven Ashe

the commencement of his rise to literary prominence.

Crowley was not seen in Paris again until the 1920s, where he finished his masterpiece *Magick in Theory and Practice*. But this was not a happy time for the Beast. Having been expelled from Mussolini's Italy, more properly Sicily, his reputation for drugs and general depravity followed him like a black dog.

A Parisian Detective suspected Crowley's post-modern coffee percolator to be a device for distilling drugs according to an account written by Israel Regardie in his *The Eye and the Triangle*. Regardie had travelled from America to Paris to place his services as a secretary at the master's disposal. Soon after this Crowley was asked to leave the country by the authorities.

Just prior to Crowley's expulsion from France Max Theon, the founder of the Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor died in Algeria. He had spent the previous eighteen years wracked by grieving and depression



## **Rosicrucians & Alchemist of La Belle Époque**

over the death of his wife Alma, with whom he had founded a spiritual initiative quite separate from the Hermetic Brotherhood around the turn of the century.

This was known as the Movement Cosmique (Cosmic Movement) based upon channelled teachings received through his wife from an entity known as *Ai Aziz*. Madame Theon was acknowledged by her husband to be central to the vitality of the movement.

Continuing to focus on received Rosicrucian lore, the Movement Cosmique superseded the Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor which was abandoned in its favour.

Theon's long time associate and fellow Rosicrucian Charles Barlet organised public meetings and published a journal entitled *La Review Cosmique* which gathered many influential supporters to the fold of Theon's *Cosmic Philosophy*.

Max Theon was a self proclaimed initiate who claimed to be immortal and for a while gained a respectable following. His wife

## Steven Ashe

Alma was of Irish ancestry and a published poet. Entering into somnambulistic states of spiritual sensitivity, she, like *Isha* the wife of René Schwaller, stole the lead on what would rise to public popularity some fifty years later as Channelling.

The Rosicrucians and Alchemists of La Belle Époque were each, in their own way, innovators and originators of popular future trends in the unfolding history of esoteric subculture.

Champagne and Canseliet's deliberate mystification of the processes of the Great Work of Alchemy has served to inspire many seekers after the mysteries, whilst their laboratory excellence and precision has inspired researchers into Alchemy such as Salt Lake City's Frater Albertus, the USA's most celebrated modern practitioner.

Schwaller's insights into alchemic homeopathy contributed in no small degree to the development of herbal extracts and tinctures now common to the shelves of

## **Rosicrucians & Alchemist of La Belle Époque**

health-food stores, whilst his theories of ancient geometries has informed the researches of Grtaham Hancock and a whole generation engaged in a New Egyptology.

There can be no doubt concerning the importance of the work of René Guenon to the study of comparative religions, or indeed upon the development of Rosicrucian Freemasonry in the early twentieth century and the influential careers of individuals such as Max Theon, Papus, Barlet, Mathers and Aleister Crowley have each inspired important threads within the western esoteric tradition.

La Belle Époque traditionally ended at the commencement of the First World War, yet its influence extended far into the twentieth century ... to the beginning of the Second World War as its protagonists died off.

It is perhaps the interference patterns caused by these World Wars in the pool of history that has obscured the contributions of these great minds in the perceptions of the post war generations. And there is also the

**Steven Ashe**

language barrier. The delightful language of France has often proved a stumbling block to the ethnocentric and inward looking inhabitants of the Anglo-Saxon world. In Britain and the Americas there is a general lack of awareness of the importance of the esotericists of late nineteenth and early twentieth century France. And yet their contribution to occult philosophy remains unparalleled

## **Rosicrucians & Alchemist of La Belle Époque**

### **Bibliography**

Al-Kemi: Hermetic, Occult, Political and Private  
Aspects of R. A. Schwaller de Lubicz -  
André Vandenbroek 1987 – Inner Traditions

Devil Worship in France - A.E. Waite -  
2003 Red Wheel/Weiser

Occult Theocracy - Edith Star Miller  
2009 Createspace

The Eye in the Triangle – Israel Regardie -  
1997- New Falcon

Fulcanelli and the Alchemic Revival – The Man  
Behind the Mystery of the Cathedrals -  
Genevieve Dubois - 2005 – Inner Traditions

The Secret History of the World & How to Get  
Out Alive - Laura-Knight Jacczyk -

**Steven Ashe**

2008 - Red Pill Press

The Mystery of the Cathedrals – Fulcanelli -

1987 - (Trans. Mary Swarder) -

Brotherhood of Life (Publications)

The Fulcanelli Phenomena – Kenneth R Johnson

1980 - C.W. Daniel

The Confessions of Aleister Crowley

– Aleister Crowley – 1969 - Jonathon Cape

King of the Shadow Realm: Aleister Crowley,  
His Life & Work – John Symonds

## **Rosicrucians & Alchemist of La Belle Époque**

Read samples of Steven Ashe's work on

<http://stevenashe.weebly.com>

Steven Ashe

# Qabalah of 50 Gates



Steven Ashe



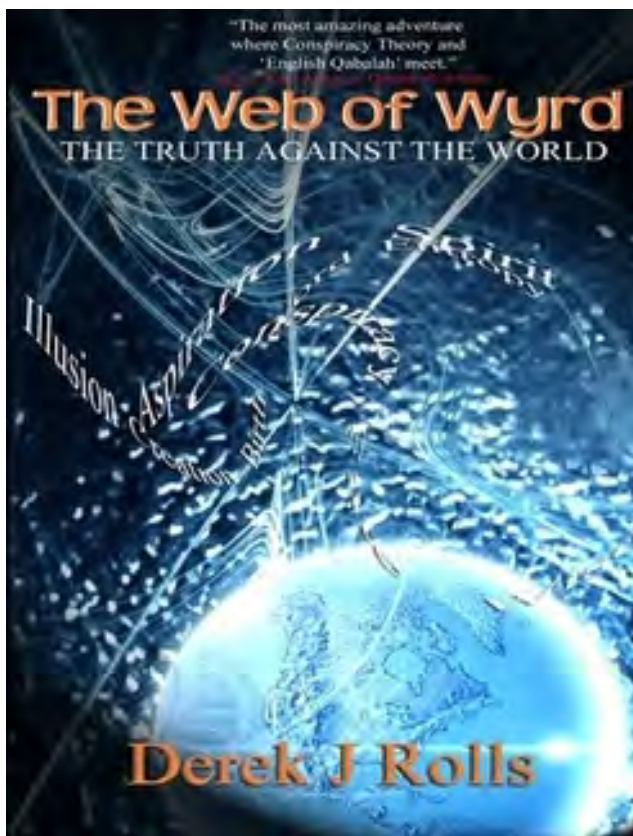
**Rosicrucians & Alchemist of La Belle Époque**

## **Qabalah of 50 Gates**

With a definitive new introduction by the author, 'Qabalah of 50 Gates' delves into the lore of the internal journey of the incorporating symbolism from the mythos-cycle of Golden Dawn Hermetics, Aleister Crowley's 'Thelema' and the mercurial methodology of Gurdjieff. This book has its roots in the Golden Dawn tradition of Magick and Alchemy, drawing upon the legends of the mediaeval alchemic philosophers, the infinity-mathematics of Georg Cantor and the eternal wisdom of the Tantric, Hermetic and Rosicrucian traditions. It is a tour de force of symbolic lore describing the experience of each of the 50 Gates of the Tree of Life which combine to present a puzzle within an enigma within a mystery. A new introduction by the author explains the symbolism featuring throughout the work.

**ISBN 978-0-9556932-3-6**

Steven Ashe



Now Available

**Rosicrucians & Alchemist of La Belle Époque**

# **The Web of Wyrð**

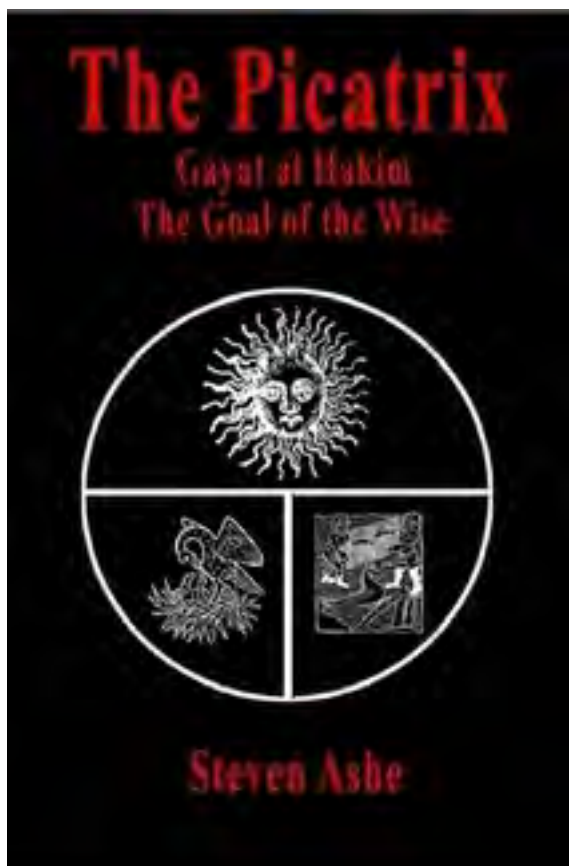
## **Derek J Rolls**

With an introduction by Steven Ashe, author of Qabalah of 50 Gates. The Web of Wyrð is unique. It highlights the terminology at the heart of magic. Our very language is the source of all magic. Core words, hinted at as 'words of power', are keys to power in the real world. Every core word, every key concept we learn unlocks dozens of simpler words and ideas. These subsidiary notions will be understood automatically and become living parts of our vocabularies.

The Web of Wyrð helps us develop our insight, deepen our understanding, strengthen our personality and focus our destiny. The Web of Wyrð is a primer. It is the first step on an inner journey, the end of which is personal transformation.

**ISBN 978-1-4461-4034-5**

Steven Ashe



**Rosicrucians & Alchemist of La Belle Époque**

# The Picatrix

English Translation. A complete grimoire of Planetary & Zodiacal Magic from The Picatrix. The elements of the practical planetary magic of The Picatrix are presented here from a new translation. The nature and theory of the Planetary powers. The Incenses of the Planets and accompanying invocations of the Planetary powers according to the Picatrix. The knowledge and conversation of the heavenly powers. The Planetary aphorisms of Al-Babel. The planets and their astral images.

This work creates a practical grimoire of planetary magic selected from all four books of the Picatrix. Each aspect of lore is referenced according to its place within the original text. Includes a study of the star names of the zodiacal signs and magical images of the zodiacal Decans. For those seeking an understanding of the practical magic of the eldest of all western magical source works, this is essential reading.

ISBN 978-1-4461-7475-3

**Steven Ashe**